

Marital Discord: Causes And Cures

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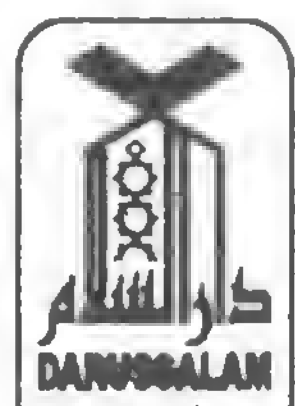
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The Foundations Of A Happy Marriage

One of the main goals of marriage in Islam is to achieve a happy union between husband and wife. We have to understand what a happy marriage means, what a happy marriage entails, and what are the means to achieving a happy marriage. Certainly, a happy marriage, in the Islamic sense, is not achieved merely through sexual relations. True, a healthy sex life between husband and wife plays an important role in achieving a happy marriage, but there are other factors as well – such as both parties living a stable life, physically, mentally, and even economically. Other factors include compatibility in terms of personality and a common view in religious matters.

Islam has laid the foundations that, if applied, help guarantee a stable married life. Some of those foundations are described in this chapter.

A Sound Choice

The Messenger of Allâh ﷺ said:

«تُنكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ: لِمَالِهَا وَلِحَسَبِهَا وَلِجَمَالِهَا وَلِدِينِهَا، فَاظْفَرْ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ تَرِبَتْ يَدَاكَ»

"A woman is married for four (qualities or possessions): for her wealth, for her (honorable) lineage, for her beauty, and for her religion. So succeed in acquiring the woman of religion: Taribat Yadâk (You will then profit and succeed; or this expression is used to encourage people to do something – in this case, to marry a woman who practices the teachings of Islam)."^[1]

This *Hadith* indicates that in all affairs, and in marriage particularly (since a person is choosing not a temporary companion but a lifelong companion) one should make religion one's priority over all else.

Religion is the yardstick by which one should choose his spouse. But this does not mean that a woman's other qualities are unimportant. If a woman is rich, her husband may, with her consent, spend from her wealth. And if two women are equal in their religious devoutness,^[2] one should choose the more beautiful of the two. On the other

^[1] *Al-Bukhâri* (5090), *Muslim* (1466), *Abu Dâwud* (2032), *An-Nasâi* (6/68), *Ibn Mâjah* (1858), *Ad-Dârimi* (2170), *Ahmad* (2/428), *Al-Baihaqi* (7/79), and *Ibn Hibbân* (4025, 4026).

^[2] Though, of course, this is near impossible to measure.

hand, one should not choose a non-religious beautiful woman over a religious woman who is not beautiful. Ibn 'Amr ؓ narrated that the Prophet ﷺ said:

«لَا تَزَوِّجُوا النِّسَاءَ لِحُسْنِهِنَّ، فَعَسَى حُسْنُهُنَّ أَنْ يُرْدِيَهُنَّ، وَلَا تَزَوِّجُوهُنَّ لَأَمْوَالِهِنَّ، فَعَسَى أَمْوَالُهُنَّ أَنْ تُطْغِيَهُنَّ، وَلَكِنْ تَزَوِّجُوهُنَّ عَلَى الدِّينِ، وَلَأَمَّةٌ خَرَمَاءُ، سَوْدَاءُ ذَاتُ دِينٍ أَفْضَلُ»

"Do not marry women for their beauty: perhaps their beauty will lead to their destruction. Nor should you marry them for their wealth: perhaps their wealth will lead them to exceed the proper bounds (and become high-handed). Instead, marry them for (their) religion. And a Kharmâ (one whose nose is partly cut off and whose ear is partly punctured), black female-slave who applies the (teachings of the) religion is better (than another woman who, though she may be better looking, does not apply the teachings of the religion)."^[1]

In our society today, religious-minded men, for the most part, search for women who have a similar outlook. Most problems in this regard arise when two non-religious-minded people marry, and then one of them is guided to the truth. Perhaps the factor that leads to most failures in marriage is for a husband and wife to have not opposite, for that is not the right word, but clashing personalities and habits.

Therefore, both man and woman should learn as much as

^[1] *Ibn Mâjah* (1859) and *Al-Baihaqi* (7/80). And in *Ad-Da'ifah*, *Al-Albâni* declared the *Hadith* to be weak (1060).

they can about their prospective spouse. It is the responsibility of the families of both parties to openly declare all relevant information about their relative that is trying to get married. Doing so is in everyone's best interest, for openness at the outset is better than failure in the end. A girl's family knows her quirks and habits more than anyone else, and the same can be said about a man's family. Women are better qualified to speak about one from their sex, just as men are better qualified to speak about one from their sex.

In spite of what I have just said, people who are Islamically engaged (which simply means that a proposal has been accepted, but the marriage has not yet taken place) should not mix in a manner that is contrary to the teachings of Islam. By dating or mixing in a non-Islamic manner, two people will not really get to know each other better. A man can date a woman for 2 years, yet he will still know nothing about her quirks and foibles. He only sees her when she is at her best, and then after marriage, he learns of her many faults (and vice versa); hence the high divorce rate in Western countries. It is a girl's family members (since they have known her for her entire life) who are best qualified to give a clear depiction of her character to a prospective suitor. And it is a man's family members who are best qualified to give a clear depiction of his character to the girl to whom he is proposing and to her guardian.

Islam permits a man to know firsthand, prior to marriage, about the physical attributes of his prospective wife; of course, certain conditions must be fulfilled. Abu Hurairah رضي الله عنه reported that a man went to the Prophet ﷺ and

informed him that he married a woman from the *Ansâr* (the native inhabitants of Al-Madinah). The Prophet ﷺ asked him:

«أَنْظَرْتَ إِلَيْهَا؟»

"Did you see her?"

He said, "No." The Prophet ﷺ said:

«فَاذْهَبْ فَانْظُرْ إِلَيْهَا فَإِنَّ فِي أَعْيُنِ الْأَنْصَارِ شَيْئًا»

"Then go and look at her, for indeed, there is something in the eyes of the (people of the) *Ansâr*."^[1]

The people of knowledge disagree about the meaning of, "For indeed, there is something in the eyes of the (people of the) *Ansâr*." Some say that they were bleary-eyed; others maintain that their eyes were small; and yet others say that they had blueness in their eyes. In the narration of Abu 'Awânah in his *Mustakhraj*, the *Hadith* contains the following addition: "Verily, their eyes are small." Based on this narration, the strongest view is that the Prophet ﷺ was referring to the smallness of their eyes.

When Al-Mughirah bin Shu'bah رضي الله عنه proposed to a woman, the Prophet ﷺ said to him:

«انْظُرْ إِلَيْهَا فَإِنَّهُ أَحْرَى أَنْ يُؤَدَّمَ بَيْنَكُمَا»

"Look at her, for indeed, doing so will make it more likely for your (marriage) together to last longer."^[2]

^[1] Muslim (1424), Ahmad (2/ 76, 299), and Ibn Hibbân (4030).

^[2] Ahmad (4/245, 246), At-Tirmidhi (1087), Ad-Dârimi (2172), An-Nasâi (7/6), Ibn Mâjah (1865), and Ibn Hibbân (4032).